

VZCZCXYZ0000  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHWN #1562/01 3551936  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 211936Z DEC 07  
FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5953  
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE  
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 5888  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1846  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0283  
RUEAORD/CUSTOMS CARIBBEAN ATTACHE MIAMI FL  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J5 MIAMI FL  
RUEHCV/USDAO CARACAS VE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 001562

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
DEPT FOR PRM-DENZEL  
DEPT FOR G/TIP-TAYLOR AND BRESNAHAN  
DEPT FOR DRL-MAGGIO  
DHS FOR CARIBBEAN ATTACHE-LAPORE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/21/2017

TAGS: KCRM PHUM PGOV ELBA CN DR ST XL

SUBJECT: DOMINICA: TRAFFICKING VICTIMS LIKELY EXIST, BUT NO ONE CAN CONFIRM

REF: BRIDGETOWN 1530

Classified By: DCM O.P. Garza for reason 1.4 (b).

**¶1.** (SBU) SUMMARY: PolOff hosted a roundtable discussion on trafficking in persons, pulling together representatives from key government offices and NGOs. The discussion showed that, although many officials believe trafficking victims might exist among commercial sex workers, Chinese laborers, and participants of transactional sex, little research has been conducted to gather concrete evidence on this issue. Participants agreed that further research and outreach are both necessary, but that Dominica's human and financial resources are insufficient to accomplish such goals. Incorporation of Dominica into existing PRM-funded IOM programs would be a simple solution to help Dominica initiate domestic anti-trafficking programs. END SUMMARY

THE WHO AND THE WHY

-----  
**¶2.** (SBU) On November 27, PolOff hosted a roundtable discussion on trafficking in persons in Dominica. Participants included representatives from the Dominica National Council of Women, the Red Cross, the Criminal Investigations Division of the police force, the Coast Guard, Immigration, the National AIDS Program in the Ministry of Health, and the Welfare Division and Women's Bureau, both of the Ministry of Community Development. The purpose of the discussion was to help interested parties come together on the issue of human trafficking. Previous conversations between PolOff and relevant parties suggest that there is little consensus in Dominica on the existence of trafficking victims, with many government officials believing it is not currently a problem.

TRAFFICKING IN THE SEX INDUSTRY

-----  
**¶3.** (U) The workshop identified four possible scenarios involving trafficking victims in Dominica. The first pertains to trafficking victims among foreign prostitutes. Almost all formal prostitutes in Dominica are from the

Dominica Republic. An HIV/AIDS counselor discussed the findings from a 2006 study conducted by the Centre of Integrated Orientation and Investigation. The study claimed that women left the DR to Dominica for work, traditional or sexual; but that once there, they faced various problems entrapping them into sex work. The Dominican public has a general bias against any women of Latin American origin, assuming she is there for prostitution. As such, DR women are commonly treated poorly and face cultural and language barriers inhibiting their ability to reach out for help. Also, most of these women are enslaved to debt, either back in the DR or as a result of travel to Dominica.

¶4. (SBU) Roundtable participants generally agreed with these characterizations, with the HIV/AIDS counselor insisting that Dominican attitudes towards DR women need to change before any assistance will find success. An NGO counselor supported these statements, claiming that she can safely say that trafficking is alive and well in Dominica, but that she could not give details due to confidentiality.

#### CHINESE LABORERS AS POTENTIAL VICTIMS

---

¶5. (C) Participants agreed that some of the Chinese laborers are likely trafficking victims. Dominica's Red Cross representative pointed out the stark increase in Chinese labor throughout the island and the poor living conditions these laborers commonly endure. Prior to the workshop, Dominica's Labor Commissioner, Matthew LeBlanc, informed EmbOffs that he recognizes the likelihood of trafficking victims among Chinese laborers, but that the stark cultural divide between the two countries makes outreach or assistance extremely difficult.

#### TRANSACTIONAL SEX

---

¶6. (SBU) Similar to other Caribbean islands, the pervasiveness of transactional sex is a potential source of trafficking victims (reftel). Like its neighbors, Dominican society suffers from impoverished families forcing their young girls into informal prostitution as a source of family income. Girls offering sexual favors to older men in exchange for gifts is another common phenomenon. A number of these women become entrapped by their situation. A Dominican welfare officer shared with PolOff a specific example in which a college student has been in a transactional relationship with a drug dealer for five years. This relationship currently pays the student's school fees. In addition to the financial assistance, the victim will not leave the relationship out of fear of what her abusive, drug dealer "boyfriend" will do to her if she did.

#### WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

---

¶7. (SBU) While the roundtable participants were able to identify the above sectors as likely sources of trafficking victims, they lacked evidence to substantiate these beliefs. The quorum agreed that the first priority needs to be research and investigation. Government officials agreed that there are insufficient funds and human resources to successfully conduct such research. (NOTE: In addition to the lack of resources, there appeared a lack of experience and capacity in how to perform such research. End Note.) To overcome this, participants agreed that they need to identify who should take the lead in research and investigations and then obtain training in trafficking investigations for these officials. They also agreed that there needs to be more public awareness and outreach. Furthermore, police representatives agreed that Dominican law needs to be updated, giving officers better tools in combating trafficking in persons.

#### THE HISTORICAL HAITIAN SCENARIO

---

¶8. (U) One of the greatest obstacles in recognizing trafficking victims is widespread confusion between human trafficking and human smuggling. In previous years, Dominica suffered from large amounts of illegal migration through its borders. Immigrants, predominantly Haitian, would travel legally to Dominica, but then leave illegally by ship to the French islands of Martinique or Guadeloupe as a stepping stone towards the United States. Dominica cracked down on this issue by requiring Haitian citizens to obtain a visa for travel to Dominica and to pay a ECD 1000 (USD 400) deposit, refundable upon legal departure from Dominica. This trend, however, created a general misunderstanding among government officials and the public that such illegal smuggling and trafficking are synonymous. Dominica is the only Eastern Caribbean state with a law against trafficking in persons, but the text of the law clearly prohibits human smuggling rather than trafficking. Experts aware of the legal difference between smuggling and trafficking are currently working to change current misunderstandings in Dominica.

A LITTLE TRAINING WOULD GO A LONG WAY

-----

¶9. (SBU) COMMENT: Dominica is a clear example of where modest assistance through basic training sessions and outreach materials could have a large impact. Participation in the International Organization of Migration's Caribbean program, funded by PRM, could be a perfect example of such assistance. This workshop proved that there is enough interest in Dominica to initiate a standardized approach in identifying and combating trafficking in persons on the island.

OURISMAN